

The President. This is a case of why frivolous lawsuits hurt our economy. This is money that they are spending that could be better spent on employee health benefits, expanding the business.

[*Mr. McFee made further remarks.*]

The President. Right. Well, thanks for sharing with us.

Mr. McFee. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Mr. President. [*Laughter*]

Frank Sullivan—welcome, Frank. Thanks for coming. Where do you live? What's the name of your company? Are you the president?

Frank C. Sullivan. Yes, sir, I am the president. [*Laughter*]

The President. Mr. President. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Sullivan. I first want to thank you very much for your leadership on this issue. It is slowly destroying our country's manufacturing base.

[*Mr. Sullivan, president and chief executive officer, RPM International, Inc., Medina, OH, continued his remarks.*]

The President. Congress needs to act. I mean, I can't make it any more plainly than to listen to these two stories here. I appreciate you sharing that with us. I guess what happened is the big manufacturers no longer exist, and so these lawyers keep searching and searching and searching until they find medium-sized businesses and small businesses. It's not right. It just isn't. We want a legal system that works in America. I want people to say, "The system is fair." And folks, the system isn't fair right now. It's not fair to those who

are getting sued, and it's not fair for those who justly deserve compensation.

And I want you to hear the story from Mary Lou Keener. Mary Lou has served our Government. She is a public servant, but she's here to talk about her dad.

[*Mary Lou Keener made brief remarks.*]

The President. There you go. Good job. Well, there you have it. The system isn't fair. It's not fair to those who have been harmed. It's not fair to those who are trying to employ people. It's just not fair.

And so I've come to the great State of Michigan to help—I asked these citizens to help highlight a problem. And we have a duty to solve problems, and this is a problem. And I hope you let your Senators know and your Congresspeople know that we've got a problem and that you as citizens expect people of good will to come together, to forget vested interests, to focus on a solution for the good of the people of this country.

I want to thank you all for coming to give us a chance to discuss this vital issue. I told Mary Lou—I told you too—that I intend to make this an issue. Starting today, we've made it an issue for the year 2005, and I look forward to working with the Congress to get something done.

God bless you all, and thanks for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:15 p.m. in the Macomb Center for the Performing Arts at Macomb Community College. In his remarks, he referred to Albert Lorenzo, president, Macomb Community College.

The President's Radio Address *January 8, 2005*

Good morning. Americans continue to mourn the victims of the devastating tsunamis in the Indian Ocean. More than

150,000 lives are now feared lost, including tens of thousands of children.

Communities have been decimated from Indonesia to Thailand to India to East Africa. Thousands are missing or injured, and millions are thought to be homeless or without food and clean water.

The world has united behind this urgent cause, and the United States is taking a leading role. We're working with other governments, relief organizations, and the United Nations to coordinate a swift and effective international response. We are rushing food, medicine, and other vital supplies to the region. And we are focusing efforts on helping the women and children who need special attention, including protection from the evil of human trafficking.

This past week, I sent a delegation led by Secretary of State Colin Powell and Governor Jeb Bush of Florida to the Indian Ocean region. They surveyed the damage in several countries, met with local and regional leaders, assessed the relief efforts in place, and began to evaluate what more can be done to help. Secretary Powell reported that American relief efforts are making major visible progress.

We have made an initial commitment of \$350 million in aid. And those funds are being distributed promptly to organizations on the ground. Navy vessels, including the U.S.S. *Abraham Lincoln*, have moved into the region to help provide food, medical supplies, and clean water. Helicopters and other military aircraft are meeting critical needs by airlifting supplies directly to victims in remote areas. As in so many other places, our service men and women are showing the courage and compassion of our Nation to the world.

We're also seeing the good heart of America in an outpouring of generosity here at home. Private citizens are showing their compassion in creative and inspiring ways. On a rainy day in Washington State, children sold hot chocolate by the side of the road and gave their profits to charity. Seven professional basketball players pledged to donate \$1,000 to UNICEF for every point they scored in a game. Amer-

ican businesses have contributed cash and products, and many are matching donations by their employees. Churches, temples, synagogues, mosques, and other religious congregations are taking up special collections for disaster victims.

To draw even greater amounts of private donations, I asked former Presidents Bill Clinton and George Bush to lead a nationwide charitable fundraising drive. Their mission is to encourage contributions, both large and small, directly to the organizations with recovery efforts underway in the disaster area.

I am grateful to the courageous relief groups that have responded so quickly to this catastrophe, including the Red Cross and Red Crescent, Salvation Army, Catholic Relief Services, Save the Children, CARE, AmeriCares, and many others. Many of these organizations have long experience with natural disasters and in-depth knowledge of the recovery needs. They're in the best position to use donations wisely and effectively.

To encourage support for these groups, I have signed legislation allowing Americans to deduct from their 2004 Federal income tax cash contributions made to tsunami relief efforts this month. I urge all Americans to contribute as they are able. More information about making a donation is available on the Internet at www.usafreedomcorps.gov.

In this time of grief for so many around the world, Americans have come together to pray for the victims and families of the tsunami disaster. We think especially of the children who have been lost and the survivors searching for their families. And we offer our sustained compassion and generosity as the people of the devastated region begin to rebuild.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:50 a.m. on January 7 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on January 8. The transcript was made available

by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 7 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Sec-

retary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Statement on the Palestinian Presidential Election *January 9, 2005*

I am heartened by today's strong turnout in the Palestinian elections. Palestinians throughout the West Bank and Gaza took a key step toward building a democratic future by choosing a new President in elections that observers describe as largely free and fair. This is a historic day for the Palestinian people and for the people of the Middle East.

America and all free nations strongly support the efforts of the Palestinian people to create lasting democratic institutions. These efforts—including today's Presidential elections and the parliamentary elections that will follow in several months—are essential for the establishment of a sovereign, independent, viable, democratic, and peaceful Palestinian state that can live alongside a safe and secure Israel. These elections are further proof that, when given a choice, all peoples seek to live in liberty and to choose their own government.

The United States stands ready to help the Palestinian people realize their aspirations. The new Palestinian President and his cabinet face critical tasks ahead, includ-

ing fighting terrorism, combating corruption, building reformed and democratic institutions, and reviving the Palestinian economy. We look forward to working with him and the Palestinian people to address these challenges and to advance the cause of Middle East peace consistent with the vision I set forth on June 24, 2002, of two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. Other countries also have constructive and vital roles to play. Israel must help to improve the humanitarian and economic situation in the West Bank and Gaza and follow through with the Disengagement Plan. The Arab States must take concrete steps with all parties to create a regional environment conducive to peace, lend financial support to the Palestinian people, and refuse to assist or harbor terrorists. The United States is looking carefully at how we can best organize and fund our own efforts to help the parties achieve a lasting peace.

NOTE: In his statement, the President referred to President-elect Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) of the Palestinian Authority.

Statement on the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement Comprehensive Peace Agreement *January 9, 2005*

I congratulate the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement on the signing of a comprehensive peace agreement. I thank all the officials

of the United States Government who have worked hard to help achieve this agreement, including Secretary of State Colin Powell, former Special Envoy for Sudan,